

Worksheet: Recognizing & Breaking Down Arguments

Section 1: Identify the Argument

1. What is the main disagreement?

Briefly summarize the issue in a single sentence.

- Person A:

- Person B:

- Person C (if applicable):

2. Who are the participants?

- Person A:

- Person B:

- Person C (if applicable):

3. What are the stated positions of each participant?

- Person A's Position:

- Person B's Position:

- Person C's Position:

Section 2: Explore the Roots of the Argument

1. What are the immediate triggers?

- Describe the events or behaviors that sparked the disagreement.

2. What deeper emotions are connected to the argument?

- Identify feelings such as anger, fear, sadness, or insecurity that might be underlying the disagreement.

3. What past experiences might be influencing each person's perspective?

- Person A:

- Person B:

- Person C:

4. Are there any unmet needs being expressed?

- Person A:

- Person B:

- Person C:

Section 3: Examine Underlying Beliefs

1. What core beliefs or values might each person be bringing to the argument?

- Person A:

- Person B:

- Person C:

2. How might cultural, familial, or societal influences be shaping these beliefs?

- Examples: Gender roles, religious expectations, or cultural norms.

Section 4: Assess Logical Fallacies

1. Does the argument include any of the following logical fallacies?

- Refer to the list on the next page and identify examples if applicable:

2. Examples of logical fallacies in the argument:

- Person A:

- Person B:

- Person C:

Logical Fallacies

Ad Hominem: Attacking the person making the argument rather than addressing the argument itself.

Example: "You're always late, so your opinion on time management is invalid."

Strawman: Misrepresenting or exaggerating someone's argument to make it easier to attack.

Example: "You don't want to go out tonight? So you're saying you don't care about spending time together?"

Slippery Slope: Arguing that a single action will inevitably lead to a chain of negative events.

Example: "If we let them choose the restaurant tonight, we'll never get to pick where we go again."

False Dichotomy (Either/Or): Presenting two options as the only possibilities when others exist.

Example: "Either you're with me, or you're against me."

Circular Reasoning: Supporting an argument by restating the conclusion as evidence.

Example: "He's a great partner because he's so great to be with."

Hasty Generalization: Making a broad claim based on limited or insufficient evidence.

Example: "You didn't respond to my text. You never care about what I have to say."

Appeal to Emotion: Using emotional manipulation instead of logical reasoning to persuade.

Example: "If you really loved me, you'd agree with me on this."

Post Hoc Ergo Propter Hoc (False Cause): Assuming that because one event followed another, the first caused the second.

Example: "We started arguing more after you got that new job; the job must be the problem."

Appeal to Tradition: Arguing that something is better or correct because it's always been done that way.

Example: "We've always celebrated the holidays at my parents' house. Why change now?"

Red Herring: Introducing an irrelevant topic to distract from the main issue.

Example: "Why are you upset that I forgot our anniversary? You never complain when I'm busy working!"

Bandwagon Fallacy: Arguing that something is true or right because everyone else agrees with it.

Example: "All of our friends think it's fine to argue this way. Why don't you?"

False Equivalence: Drawing an inaccurate comparison between two unrelated or unequal things.

Example: "You forgot my birthday, but I forgot to do the dishes. We're even."

Personal Incredulity: Dismissing an argument because it's difficult to understand or seems implausible.

Example: "I can't believe you're upset about something so small—it doesn't make sense to me."

Appeal to Authority: Citing an authority figure's opinion as the sole evidence, even if it's unrelated to the topic.

Example: "My favorite therapist says this is the right way to argue, so you must be wrong."

Tu Quoque (You Too): Responding to criticism by accusing the other person of the same fault.

Example: "You're upset that I didn't listen? You never listen to me either!"

Section 5: Reframe and Resolve

- 1. What common ground exists between the two participants?**
 - Identify shared goals, values, or desires.

- 2. How can each person reframe their perspective to promote understanding?**
 - Person A:

 - Person B:

 - Person C:

- 3. What steps can be taken to resolve the disagreement constructively?**
 - Brainstorm actions or compromises that respect both perspectives.

- 4. What support might be helpful (e.g., therapy tools, communication strategies)?**

Footnotes

1. Logical fallacies adapted from Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and modern critical thinking frameworks.
2. Exploration of unmet needs informed by Marshall Rosenberg's *Nonviolent Communication*.

Resources

1. **Aristotle. (1991). *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*. Oxford University Press.**
 - A foundational text exploring the principles of rhetoric, including the role of logical fallacies in persuasion.
2. **Rosenberg, M. (2015). *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life*. PuddleDancer Press.**
 - Offers tools for identifying unmet needs and fostering empathetic communication in conflicts.
3. **Tannen, D. (1990). *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*. Ballantine Books.**
 - Explores how gendered communication styles can lead to misunderstandings in relationships.
4. **Beck, A. T. (1976). *Cognitive Therapy and the Emotional Disorders*. International Universities Press.**
 - Introduces cognitive distortions and their role in interpersonal conflict.
5. **Patterson, K., Grenny, J., McMillan, R., & Switzler, A. (2011). *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High*. McGraw-Hill.**
 - Provides strategies for navigating high-stakes conversations with tact and emotional intelligence.
6. **Gottman, J., & Silver, N. (1999). *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*. Harmony Books.**
 - Details practical steps for improving communication and resolving conflicts in intimate relationships.